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Muskogee

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

THE HOUSEHOLD

Geographical, economic, consanguineal, and religious factors all entered into the evolution of the Creek confederacy. They took concrete shape in the household, family, clan, phratry, clan moiety, town, and town moiety. 592

Women owned the houses and were permanent occupants, moving only as new houses were built for them or as the entire group to which they belonged migrated seasonally or permanently. These houses were also the homes (hûti) of the nearest male blood relations, those whom the women called "uncles," "brothers," and "sons." They, however, normally went to the homes of their wives as soon as they were married, besides spending much time in the public square and in the tcokofa. On the other hand, aged men, whose wives had died and whose children were grown up and scattered, might come back to the homes of their childhood, or, as frequently happened, they might spend their last years moving from house to house among the women of their own clan connection—never, however, among those of the clan connection of their wives. [562] [591]. [888]

A typical Creek home would therefore consist of a man and woman, their children, one or more sons-in-law, some grandchildren, some aged or dependent individuals of the same clan group, and perhaps an orphan or two or one or more individuals taken in war. These last, though somewhat looked down upon at first, were rapidly assimilated with the tribe which had captured them and soon came to be appreciated in accordance with their proven merit. There was nothing that may properly be called a slave system among the Indians of the Southeast. Where polygamy existed the wives were generally own sisters and usually inhabited the same house, though there were cases in which a man had wives living in two or more distinct houses. [597] [567] [595]

THE FAMILY

GENERAL REMARKS

A fairly accurate clue to the Muskogee conception of the "family" is furnished by the terms of relationship. These consist of a number of root words, not now analyzable, and words formed from these which it is natural to assume are secondary in importance. Many terms are of the "classificatory" type, covering a number of individuals who to our way of thinking bear quite distinct relations to the speaker. Theorists have tried to maintain that this collective use preceded the special or individual use, but so far as the Muskogee are concerned the evidence points to the special application as having been, if not the original, at least the typical or primary. Secondary or derivative 601

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peared to them most eligible, one who was a good hunter, a good warrior, or a good ball player, or all of these, he being also of course outside of the prohibited degrees. All his qualifications were reviewed and all possible objections, consanguineal and other, considered. After a majority of the clan relations had agreed they informed the girl's parents, and the latter told their daughter to make her bed ready. Then the youth was brought, and, pointing to the bed, they said to him, "There is your bed. Lie in it." Then they went away and left them.

On the other hand, at a council of the clan to which a certain youth belonged it might be suggested that he was a nice fellow and getting along in years, and that such and such a girl was well brought up and cared for and an altogether desirable match, and that they had better send over to her people and ask for her. Then they would send someone over. The people of the girl's clan would meet and say "In a few days you will hear from us." The time having elapsed, word would be sent, and, if it were favorable, in a few days more the young man was conducted thither. Then the parents of the girl informed her what was expected of her and told her to prepare her bed. They brought the youth in and told the two that that was to be their bed henceforth.[12] In olden times this was the only legal marriage; nevertheless, from what has been quoted it is apparent that temporary unions were tolerated in the nature of trial marriages or with women who had become outcasts.

Speck was told that a wife sometimes accompanied her husband to his town and resided there, in which case the children belonged to that town.[13] This must have happened rather rarely and in any case would not affect the clanship of the children, which always remained the same as that of the mother.

The testimony obtained from the Texas Alabama is to much the same effect as the foregoing. Marriages were arranged by the clan uncles and aunts, and the father and mother of both parties, who first agreed together and then talked to the young people in order to presuade them to agree. When this was accomplished the girl prepared her couch for her husband, who came after all were asleep and got up and left before daylight. He did the same thing every night for about a weak, and for a month afterwards his wife's people did not talk much to him nor he to them.

These ceremonies apply particularly to marriage between quite young people. It is said that in marriages which took place later in life the parties concerned had as much voice in the matter as their clansmen and clanswomen. Probably they had more, as the

[12] Sometimes a separate house was put up for them before the wedding took place. See p. 372, and Speck in Mem. Am. Anth. Assn., vol. II, p. 117.

[13] Speck in Mem. Am. Anth. Assn., vol. II, p. 117.